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ABSTRACT

The guide is designed to assist the small school administrator in the successful recruitment of teachers. It provides a recruitment design, which encompasses community and school assets, and a list of "ideal characteristics" of teachers who are congruent with the needs of small schools. Fifteen strategies for effective recruitment include competitive salaries and extra duty pay, fringe benefit packages, subsidized teacher retraining, and low-cost housing. Interviewing is covered in terms of the interviewer, strategies involved in selling the district, and ways of screening applicants; a checklist for interviewers is provided. Induction systems are discussed in relation to short term orientations and long term personnel support programs. Additionally, a list of goals for an effective induction program is provided. Strategies for retention include: (1) direct impact activities--increased salaries, community involvement opportunities, and property acquisition assistance; (2) long range growth activities--inservice incentive systems, intra- and inter-district faculty exchange, and merit increases for exceptional performance; (3) motivational strategies--paying professional organization dues, locating adequate housing, and establishing the support of the school baord. (AH)

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RECRUITMENT AND STRATEGIES FOR SMALL SCHOOLS

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RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Developing more refined recruitment strategies is critical to solving the problems community schools are now facing as they compete for quality personnel. Administrators in these community schools must design and implement a plan for teacher recruitment that specifically reflects the needs and uniquenesses of the local district. Effective recruitment designs generally focus on the following topics:

- Friendliness of small communities
- Potential for status available in the prospective community
- Flexible programing to work in one's own interest area
- Small enrollments facilitating individual attention to students
- District focus on quality education programs
- Administrative support for professional growth and development
- Peer support environments
- Professional growth opportunities
- Any special self-development opportunities available such as proximities to professional libraries or extended university programs

Developing The Recruiting Strategy

The key to effective teacher recruiting is encompassed in the ability of the recruiter to locate teachers who possess characteristics which are congruent with the needs of the school. These "ideal characteristics" for many smaller schools usually include, but are not limited to, teachers who are:

- Certified and able to teach in more than one subject matter area or grade level.
- Prepared to supervise several extracurricular activities.
- Able to teach a wide range of abilities in a single classroom
- Able to adjust to the uniqueness of the community in terms of social opportunities, life styles, shopping needs, and continuous scrutiny.

As the recruitment stategies are developed, each of these concepts must be expanded so as to specificately represent the

true needs and true characteristics of the community. The closer these characteristics reflect the reality of working and living in a district the greater the probability of securing and retaining quality teachers.

Some strategies now being used by school districts are presented as practical suggestions for items to be included in the plan for recruiting:

- The easiest and most efficient strategy for teacher recruitment is based on a competitive salary and extra duty pay schedule. The community is the key to this suggestion and they will determine the part that money will play in the recruiting effort. Patrons must make an overt decision to pay what is necessary for attracting quality teachers.

- A very broad fringe benefit package may be more attractive to prospective teachers than salary. These benefits may include such items as:
  - Paid Insurance Premium (i.e. medical, hospital, dental, life, and salary protector)
  - Personal Leave
  - Sick Leave
  - Professional Leave
  - Credit Unions (i.e. Board of Education matches ½ of teacher contribution)
  - Sick leave bank (some days of leave are in a "bank" to be used by any employee who has needs in excess of available days. These are repaid after they are used.)

- The district can subsidize the cost of teacher retraining to fit the needs of the school district. This offers the prospective teacher a method to obtain an additional area of certification.

- The district may offer to pay the costs of a teacher earning a master's degree, and in turn, the teacher makes a commitment to teach in the district for three years after receiving the degree.

- The district may identify outstanding junior level education majors in the various colleges and universities, select those that meet the district's needs and offer financial assistance in the form of scholarships. This agreement would be contingent upon the student's willingness to sign a letter of commitment to teach in the school district for specific period of time.

- Administrators could telephone school of education and request names of the highest ranking graduates in the field in which personnel were needed. School administrators would then call the recommended graduates, explaining their penchant for quality and why they were interested in that particular graduate. Paid trips to the district for these individuals.

- District may find it helpful to incorporate local community groups and potential support systems into packaged recruitment materials. This strategy uses community groups as the featured organization on brochures or letterhead stationary so that the potential recruit has a feeling of belonging to the larger community.

- Some districts have involved local businesses, welcome wagons, civic clubs, and other groups in their actual recruiting processes and interviews. The friendliness exhibited by some of these groups has frequently facilitated hiring processes.

- The district may identify and actively recruit outstanding teachers in large districts and prospective teachers that were raised and educated in smaller schools by reminding these individuals of the many benefits they received while growing up in a small town atmosphere. These benefits may include such items as:
  - A slower pace of living
  - Smaller class size with an opportunity to get to know each student as an individual.
  - Raising children in a more controlled environment.
  - Opportunities for children to be involved in several extracurricular activities.

- Paying interview expenses of applicant.

- Assist with securing moving loans or paying part of the cost of relocating.

- Arranging for interest-free loans before arrival of first paycheck.

- The district may emphasize teacher autonomy and direct access to the administration. The teacher may be the only person working in a specific subject matter area or grade level, thus having greater control over the learning outcomes (curriculum) and the teaching methodology (instruction). The chance to directly influence administrative decisions is quite appealing to many teachers.

- The school district could provide less expensive housing for teachers. This recruiting idea could be accomplished in several ways:
  The district would implement a vocation education program in the building trades. The students would learn a saleable a skill (carpentry) and at the same time develop a rental property for teachers.

The district could encourage members of the community to provide housing. The local banker can have his/her bank provide less expensive housing in the form of duplexes, houses, or mobile homes. This idea incorporates community to become part of the recruitment plan.

- The school district could encourage the business community to help by providing summer employment for teachers. If the school recruiter is able to reasonably assure the candidate is more likely to accept the position. The business sector in the community should welcome the opportunity to hire quality individuals. Using this idea, both the community and the school district receive benefits.

- In order to attract effective teachers, it may be necessary to provide employment opportunities for the teacher's spouse. This can be accomplished through a joint effort of the community and the school district. Encourage local employment sources to let the school district recruiter know when they have job vacancies. The school district may fill its needs for support personnel through the pool of unemployed spouses.

The development of a quality small school depends directly upon the quality of teachers employed. The administrator and board of education in smaller school districts are primarily responsible for teacher employment. However, the community can provide additional recruitment incentives and should accept some responsibility for a quality educational program. Recruitment must become a joint venture between the community and the school district and the development of a recruiting plan that involves both should be very successful.

INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

Interviewing prospective applicants is a skill that must be fully developed if quality personnel are to be hired. The plan for interviewing includes selecting the proper person as well as the proper strategies.

A sincerely interested interviewer is an asset that cannot be over-emphasized. This type of person is skilled in active listening techniques and has basic positive feelings for the community for which he is recruiting personnel. Recruits often respond more to individuals and their styles and skills than to their positions or the contend they represent.

Interviewing strategies involve selling the district and screening applicants. Recruits will frequently select jobs after considering whom they might feel comfortable working with and receive reinforcement from. Interviewers should provide descriptions of potential informal and formal peer support groups. This is typically a much stronger attraction than verbage concerning available facilities and equipment.

In screening applicants, the interviewer will want to look carefully at the degree to which recruits:

- Would be accepting of the rural culture.
- Have behaviors appropriate for the environment in which they will be living.
- Have generic skills.
- Have interest consistent with local lifestyles.
- Interest in gaining knowledge of the local community, its political system, and history.
- The ability to develop local and long distance support systems.

Administrators should employee informal checklists when interviewing persons external to community. It is important that the same data is gathered about each applicant so that valid comparisons

can be made. The following questions may be of value in developing the interviewing strategies:

1. Will the interviewee's personal traits and goals be compatible with those in the are?
2. Will the community provide the necessary social opportunities for this applicant? district?
3. Will the position provide challenge for the applicant?
4. Does the applicant have hobbies or other avocational interest which initiate self-entertainment and self-sufficiency?
5. Is the applicant genuinely interested in learning about the unique aspects of this particular community?
6. Is the applicant flexible enough to cross interdisciplinary lines as required in an area of scarce specialized resources.
7. Will the applicant able to cooperate with people with different viewpoints?

INDUCTION STRATEGIES

An effective induction system contains short term orientation activities and long term personnel support programs. These should be based on a specific set of goals that reflect the needs of new employees and are consistent with the philosophy of the school district. It should be recognized that the full induction process will take about three years. The following goals are basic to a sound induction plan:

1. Establish communication processes within the School and the district that will make teachers feel welcome and secure.
2. Help teachers become an integral part of the community.
3. See that each employee receives help in adjusting to their work environment.
4. Provide a vehicle for employees to integrate with their colleagues.
5. Facilitate the beginning of school year through an aggressive orientation program.
6. Provide a continuous (year long) orientation program that reinforces these goals throughout the year.

Pre-School/Beginning of the Year Activities

a) Develop an understanding of the community, especially, the social, cultural, ethnic and religious make-up.
b) Make visits to institutions such as libraries, museums, recreational facilities, major commercial facilities and and other places of interest.
c) Plan an open exchange about community standards, customs and other uniquenesses.
d) Pair beginning teachers with master teachers based on subject taught and/or physical nearness of the teachers. This requires significant preplanning and a thorough knowledge of the characteristics of each teacher. Its major benefit is to provide a continuous communication link. Master teachers who are a part of the buddy system should meet with administrators regularly to exchange experiences and identify general problems that need to be dealt with.
e) Plan a series of sessions to communicate the schools operating philosophy and uniquenesses to new staff members.

Continuous Orientation Activities

A. Plan special inservices to be held through out the year dealing with topics specifically directed toward beginning teachers. These are planned to dove tail with the preschool orientation activities.

B. Appoint someone to be responsible for helping the beginning teacher furnish and set up her room. There is strong belief that only through this kind of scheduled help can preparing the room be accomplished in a desirable manner. This same person should be a resource for making changes throughout the year.

C. New teachers are supervised so as to accomplish two goals. Regular (weekly at least) contacts by administrators and supervisors are used to open communication lines and to identify problems as soon as possible. In addition the barriers to communication between teachers and principals are consciously lowered so teachers will more readily share ther true feelings. Through these types of exchanges the expectations of the school can be more clearly delineated.

D. Formal evaluation of the beginning teacher orientation program is carried on regularly. This process should provide clues to effectiveness of the program and provide suggestins for improvement. Both an oral discussion and written evaluations should be used.

E. Schedule a session in January for teachers and administrators who are in their first two years in the school. Topics should include any changes since school started, plans for the remainder

of the year and a reemphasis of goals. Time should be spent giving feedback about how the staff is doing and for allowing the staff to discuss their problems.

F. Plan a year long series of social activities that allow the staff to get to know each other and interest with each other on a non school basis.

STRATEGIES FOR RETENTION

A major problem in smaller schools is maintaining the effective teacher in the school system. In order to accomplish this, school districts need to develop a plan to achieve this goal. The following ideas are practical suggestions for maintaining effective teachers in the smaller schools:

Direct Impact Activities

- The most obvious suggestion is increased salaries for teachers who choose to remain with the school district. Smaller schools must have a commitment from the community for a quality school system if this suggestion is to be implemented. Administrators in smaller schools need to share the problems of recruitment and maintaining of effective teacher with the community. If this can be accomplished, quite possible the community will support increased local funding for teacher salaries and extra duty pay.

- The community school administrator needs to develop a close working relationship with churches, civic organizations, and other community support systems in order to encourage these groups to include teachers in their membership. In some instances community groups in smaller school districts are closed to outsiders (i.e., teachers). If teachers feel they are part of the community, then they are more likely to want to continue their employment.

- Community schools can strive to provide or encourage the community to provide recreational opportunities for teachers. This can take the form of transportation to area athletic events, summer softball leagues, fishing, and boating trips. This may include arranging transportation for group travel, for ski trips, sightseeing tours, or possible trips overseas. Members of the community would be welcome to participate in these activities.

- The community school, in conjunction with landowners and lending agencies, could make the purchase of property available to teachers who choose to buy land. If teachers have some ownership in the area, they are more likely to become a permanent citizen of the area.

Long Range Growth Activities

Placing effective teachers in leadership positions has several advantages. Leadership positions contribute to professional growth as well as personal growth. Teachers see the rewards of more autonomy, more freedom, and growth of their knowledge as being as important as increased pay. The prestige of position usually translate to community prestige thereby doubling the effect. Some strategies that districts are now using include the following:

- Initiating intra- or inter-district temporary faculty exchange programs.
- Establishing inservice incentive systems including release time, college credit, and certificate renewal.
- Providing special challenges or assignments, particularly when affiliated with pre- or in-service programs.
- Establishing merit increases or other approaches to recognize extra-ordinary performance.
- Initiating stress reduction activities ranging from desensitization to "venting," social functions, and physiological stress reduction exercises; and establishing local support systems for continuous stress reduction.

Motivational Strategies

The following "creative" retention strategies may serve as motivators for teachers and administrators as they consider their professional future:

- Paying professional organization dues
- Locating adequate housing
- Arranging social functions
- Sending indigenous persons to college and pay tuition
- Establishing school board support
- Creating higher than usual salary supplements
- Creating intellectual stimulation
- Making professional literature available

The smaller school district, in concert with the community, can influence the educational quality by actively seeking and retaining effective teachers. Basic to this process is a commitment from the school and the community to provide sufficient resources, especially time and money, to successfully carry out the program. Lack of this commitment usually doom's the project. Once the commitment is made the venture is limited only by the creativity of the district and its patrons. This monograph should provide the seeds to allow creative imagination to grow and prosper, culminating in significants improvement in the teaching and learning process of the districts schools.